

DeaFestival-Kentucky: What a feast it was!

DeaFestival-Kentucky 2008 is now just a memory but what memories they are!

By now the performers, artists, exhibitors and festival goers that made this year's event such a success have scattered to the winds, safely back in the routines of day-to-day life in all corners of the country.

For one magical weekend, however, the city of Louisville became the center of deaf culture, a sea of hands that washed over the city, shifting ideas and perceptions along the way. It was more than that, however.

DeaFestival has always been about more than just the stage or the easel. It is about the people and communication.

It is always fascinating to see this part of DeaFestival because it is something that is usually taken for granted. To see Jesse Dunahoo, a deaf-blind artist, taking time to chat with everyone who passed by his booth, is heartwarming. So is Jack Cochran,

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another artist who has a cochlear implant and communicated seamlessly. Even the hearing festival-goers who stopped in for a while felt comfortable and more than welcome. This is all

an encouraging sign of just how far we as a society have come in such a short time.

For the staff, volunteers and interpreters who work so hard to make DeaFestival a success, the scene in the lobby of the Kentucky Center at 11 a.m. on Saturday is a snapshot of the entire day. Oh to be able to have a bird's eye view of the action, to rise above the crowd and see it from a different perspective, would be amazing!

What would we see? Would it be possible to see a spirit? The spirit of family that drives DeaFestival-Kentucky? The family was everywhere – in clusters along the stairs leading to the Bomhard Theater, in pairs at the front door, in trios outside the children's tent, in a large, impressive group at the closing ceremony.

Like all family gatherings, just when it seems like the preparation will drain



everyone's energy, the anticipation of seeing the gang pushes us to dig a little deeper and find that extra reserve of energy that pushes us toward the finish line.

The best comparison to DeaFestival is Thanksgiving dinner. We know we will have a house full of people so we start planning for the feast, gathering the groceries weeks in advance. We get the spices, we dig out the roasting pan and we shine the silverware. But, much like the Thanksgiving feast, if we only had to cook dinner, the task would be easy. Instead, it takes everyone working together, utilizing their unique skills, to pull off the production.

One person cannot mix the pumpkin pie and run the vacuum at the same time. Who is available to stop changing the sheets long enough to run to the store and pick up the nutmeg we forgot? DeaFestival is a similar team effort; whether it is toting a door with signage up a flight of stairs or a run to the airport, everyone pitches in to make sure the job gets done. When we all sit down to dinner, all the hard work takes a backseat to communication, the lifeblood of us all.

At Thanksgiving dinner, we have food for

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DeaFestival: Family a reason for success

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the body. At DeaFestival, we have food for the mind. A four-course feast, featuring the Children's Program, Visual Artists, Exhibitors and SpotLights. Over time, interest in this gathering has grown, as has the guest list. This year we welcomed a new guest – Workhorse, the creator of DeaStream.com. Through their efforts, for the first time DeaFestival-Kentucky was streamed live over the Internet to anywhere in the world. Just as exciting, festival goers have a chance to see the Children's Program, as well as interviews with participants and organizers, something they had to miss in the past if they wanted to see a different part of DeaFestival.

When it was over, much like Thanksgiving dinner, it was time to sit back, relax and try to digest all that had just been placed in front of us. Just because the festivities at Kentucky Center ended at 6, the spirit of DeaFestival carried on deep into the night. From the PAH party across the street to the friendships formed at Fourth Street Live to sharing an elevator the next morning at the Galt House with a group of festival goers, the spirit remains strong.

We have been truly touched by the overwhelmingly positive response we have received for DeaFestival-Kentucky. From performers to visual artists to volunteers, it seems each has a positive memory and story from this year's event. With a staff that featured more than half without previous DeaFestival experience, it was a challenge that required more than just normal effort. No less an authority than Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, the person who brought the idea for DeaFestival to Kentucky and appeared for the first time as

a performer, stated how proud she was that Kentucky has carried on the tradition of DeaFestival. This was a theme common to most of the messages - how we at KCDHH stepped up to the plate.

While this praise is certainly humbling, we would say it should direct elsewhere – to them. The credit goes to everyone who sacrificed their time and money and made it a point to attend DeaFestival-Kentucky.

When we planned the event, we were confident it would be at least as good as previous editions, possibly better. One thing we could not control, however, was the crowd. We were legitimately worried events outside of our control – high gas prices, skyrocketing airline fares and less money in everyone's pocket – would keep people from coming. A drop of 25 percent was expected, 50 wasn't out of the question. Instead, we were shocked to find this year's DeaFestival-Kentucky attendance was as large, if not larger, than previous years.

With deaf and hard of hearing arts festivals springing up nationwide, there are many options closer to home now. But DeaFestival-Kentucky has the spirit. The feeling of togetherness, of belonging, of family. It is something we hope we never lose. And, thanks to all of you who stepped up and demonstrated how important DeaFestival is by coming when the economy gave you every reason not to, we never will.

When we convene again in 2010, be sure to spread the word and even bring a friend. There's always room for one more at the table.

Email us at kcdhh@kcdhh.org or send us a letter to KCDHH, 632 Versailles Road, Frankfort, KY 40601.

KSD icon Virginia Ward dies

Virginia Ward, a teacher at the Kentucky School for the Deaf for 41 years and an icon in the deaf community, passed away on August 25 at the age of 82. A native of Arkansas, Ward graduated from Gallaudet University and was later inducted into the hall of fame at both KSD and the Arkansas School for the Deaf. Mourners may leave messages of condolence at www.stithfuneralhome.com.

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Trooper Island trip changes perceptions

Thanks to the Kentucky State Police, deaf and hard of hearing children in Kentucky were given the opportunity to attend Trooper Island Camp during the weekend of July 25-27.

Each year children across Kentucky attend Trooper Island Camp, which was developed by the Kentucky State Police as part of a long range program of public service to the state's youth. The camp is located on an island in a secluded corner of Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park near the Cumberland and Clinton county lines.

This year the Kentucky State Police wanted to host a trial weekend featuring a deaf and hard of hearing camp. The purpose was to gauge how well deaf and hard of hearing campers and camp staff could overcome communication barriers, with the idea of incorporating a week-long camp in the future.

The Executive Board members of the Kentucky chapter of Hands & Voices chaperoned the campers to the island.

Hands & Voices is a parent-driven organization that is dedicated to supporting families with children who are deaf or

hard of hearing without a bias to communication modes or methods.

While the campers were busy with activities during the day, the board held its strategic planning meeting. In the evenings, they acted as volunteers to assist the children in other activities. Several other individuals volunteered as interpreters and chaperones.

The adventure began on Friday evening when the barge loaded and headed toward Trooper Island. Once situated in their cabins, dinner was served and the Trooper Island staff introduced themselves to the campers and volunteers. After the campers and volunteers introduced themselves to the camp staff they gave a short sign language lesson to teach staff important signs that they may need for the weekend such as yes, no, stop, wait, etc. Campers then broke up into two groups for the evening activities. Swimming and fishing kept everyone busy until dark when everyone gathered for popcorn and ice cream.

Saturday included a variety of activities, including fishing, swimming, boating and archery. That night, Trooper Sutton

took everyone on a tour of the lake in his boat, and when the tour concluded everyone gathered in the shelter house to make S'mores around the campfire.

No one wanted to leave by Sunday. Campers and camp staff had bonded and friendships were made. A group picture was made and everyone was surprised when Trooper Sutton and the camp staff gave each camper a bag full of gifts.

The weekend was an overwhelming success for everyone involved. The deaf and hard of hearing campers enjoyed every minute of their time at Trooper Island. Communication came easily for the children, who quickly found a way connect, whether they signed, spoke or wrote.

The staff quickly realized communication barriers are easily overcome and in many instances, adults could learn a thing or two from the children, who are resourceful and will not let barriers stand in the way of forming friendships.

Because of this, Trooper Island Deaf & Hard of Hearing camp 2009 is currently in the planning stages.

KCDHH establishes Margie Bridges "Pay It Forward" Award

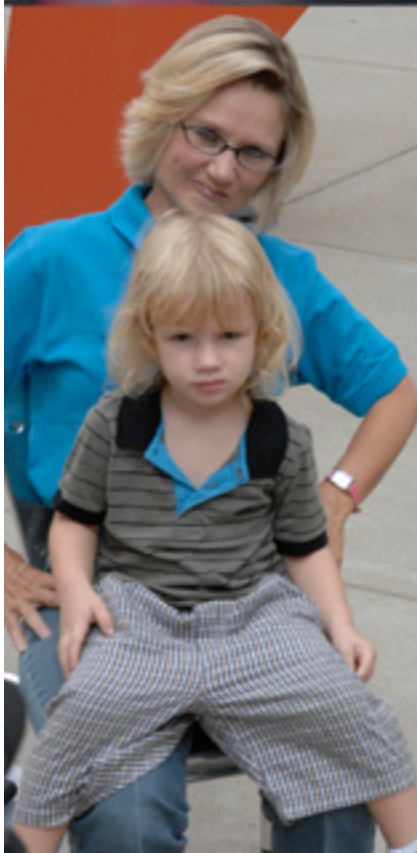
Kentucky's community-minded deaf and hard of hearing leaders are being recognized as part of KCDHH's effort to promote the spirit of "Pay It Forward."

Margie Bridges, who volunteered her time with the agency from 2000 until late 2007, was presented with an award named in her honor during a ceremony at the DeaFestival Pre-Show on Friday night, Aug. 29, at the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville.

The Margie Bridges "Pay It Forward" Award, will honor one person each year who works above and beyond the normal obligations to help the state's deaf and hard of hearing community.

Pay It Forward is a old concept that promotes responsibility by repayment of a favor or debt to a different person in need at a later time.

The plaque will be displayed at the KCDHH office in Frankfort.



Spot Lights

2008

Elizabeth "Cookie" Williams
Art Gallery



Culture Center

's Art



Children's Program



INFORMATION





New database will help consumer requests

Following months of planning, adjustments, implementation and training, a new database unveiled by the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will improve access to and accuracy of consumer requests.

The agency's new database, powered by Oracle, replaces the old system, a Microsoft Access database that had been in place for the past decade. The Access database had undergone numerous modifications in recent years to keep the system current as consumer contacts continued to grow. Ultimately, the decision to implement a new database was made in the summer of 2007 under former Executive Director Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins. Current KCDHH Interim Executive Director Virginia L. Moore has seen the project through to its completion.

"This virtual network of contacts allows us to reach all corners of the state. We can now keep the consumers informed with instantaneous information," said Moore. "Though it is a virtual network, we also realize virtual cannot replace humans. We understand that nothing can replace that interaction that comes with being helped by a caring human being. Hopefully this will allow us more time to help people."

The new Oracle database introduces several improvements for staff and

To request information from KCDHH, please fill out a new form from the agency's Web site at www.kcdhh.ky.gov/forms.

consumers alike, including the use of Web forms that can be submitted through the KCDHH Web site. Before a consumer-submitted form was printed by an agency staff member and manually entered to the database. Now, the information is submitted to staff for review and, once approved, immediately enters the database.

Consumers need not worry about the changes; the information contained in the database is confidential and is not shared with anyone. The information exists for KCDHH to provide accurate and timely assistance to consumers. Consumers are still more than welcome to contact the agency by phone, by mail or other traditional methods they are accustomed to using. The Web forms simply make things easier for the consumer, saving time while still providing almost instant access to KCDHH services.

The Oracle database also stores correspondence between the agency and the consumer, including letters and applications, for instant retrieval. With instant access to this information, KCDHH

staff will have more information at their fingertips to help resolve consumer questions or concerns.

The year-long project was overseen by Jim Lane, an information technology consultant, with assistance from a handful of software programmers from the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. Rachel Morgan, Executive Staff Interpreter at KCDHH who maintained the old Access database, led the effort to convert the current information to a new format compatible with Oracle. Jim Rivard, Network Analyst I at KCDHH, developed the new Web forms to interface with the database.

"We'll spend more time serving requests for consumers that we spent on entering the information before," said Morgan. "Now we can take that time that was spent entering information, being a slave to our technology instead of making it work for us, and serve our consumers even better."

Consumers will notice a few subtle changes, including the need for their date of birth. This information remains confidential and is used by staff to quickly identify consumer records and prevent duplicates. The Oracle database was first used on Monday, August 25, and technicians continue to streamline the process so the agency staff may deliver the most efficient service to consumers.

State Fair partnership provides exposure to services

Communication in all forms were on full display, thanks to technology demonstrations, discussion topic presentations and hearing screenings at the recently concluded Kentucky State Fair.

The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing partnered with the Heuser Hearing Institute, Hearing Loss Association of America and Hamilton Relay and shared a dynamic, interactive 900 square foot booth at Main Street Kentucky.

In addition to distributing free information, KCDHH also featured communications devices for public demonstration. The Ojo, Sorenson Videophone 200 and D-Link systems were displayed and demonstrated for curious consumers.

Hamilton Relay and HLAA also demonstrated other assistive devices, such as the CapTel, Web-based CapTel, amplified telephones and the latest captioning technology.

Once again, the Heuser Hearing Institute had licensed audiologists on site and conducted daily hearing screenings. More than 2,000 people were screened for hearing loss during the 11 days of the state fair. Audiologists also used a video otoscope to give fair goers a live view of the ear's interior.

For the first time, fair goers learned about hearing loss, as well as effective communication strategies, through a series of presentations on the Blue Ribbon Stage. The 45-minute presentations occurred on eight of the fair's 11 days. More than 600,000 people attended this year's State Fair.

Calendar of Events

SEPTEMBER

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| September 20th - | Kentucky ADAPT picnic at Millennium Park - Danville, KY |
| September 21st-27th- | Deaf Awareness Week |
| September 26th - | International Day of Sign Languages |
| September 26th-27th - | KYRID Fall Conference - Morehead, KY |
| September 26th-27th - | Cave Run Storytelling Festival - Cave Run Lake, Morehead, KY |
| September 29th - | AARP Health and Independent Living Festival - Williamsburg, KY |
| September 29th - | "Show of Hands" An event for deaf and hard of hearing students and their families - Somerset, KY |

OCTOBER

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| October 3rd - | All Terrain Kentucky Deaf Outlaws ATV Riding and Camping at S-Tree Campground - McKee, KY |
| October 18th - | SouthEast KY Deaf Community Halloween Party - London, KY |
| October 19th-21st - | Investing in Family Support Workshop - Raleigh, NC |
| October 22nd-26th- | 2008 Touch the Future/Transition and SERID Conference and Expo - Atlanta, GA |
| October 23rd - | Northern Kentucky Senior Expo 2008 - Newport, KY |
| October 25th - | YADAH Workshop for Church Interpreters - Cincinnati, OH |
| October 25th - | 119th KCDHH Commission Meeting - Lakeview Park, Frankfort, KY |

NOVEMBER

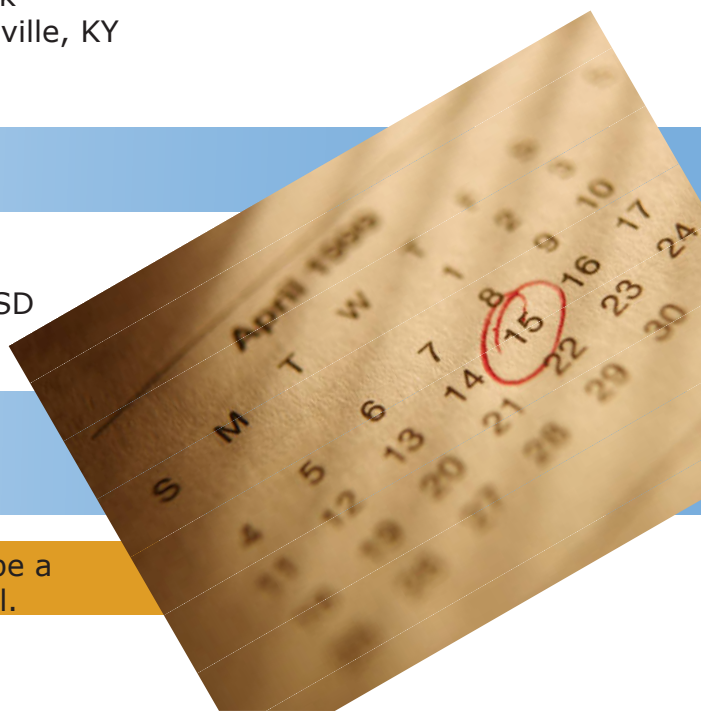
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| November 6th-8th - | Kentucky Storytelling Association 5th annual conference - Shepherdsville, KY |
| November 17th-21st - | International Education Week |
| November 21st - | KSD's Pancake Bazaar - Danville, KY |

DECEMBER

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| December 7th-13th - | Deaf Heritage Week |
| December 13th - | Clerc-Gallaudet Banquet - KSD |
| December 13th - | KSD Christmas Reception |

For more information on these and other events, please visit the KCDHH Web Bulletin Board at <http://www.kcdhh.ky.gov/home/bulletin.html>

Fall is a wonderful time of change and change can be a beautiful thing. Please take time to enjoy the fall.





KCDHH

632 Versailles Road

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An agency of the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Celebrate Deaf Awareness Week September 21-27

National Deaf Awareness Week will be celebrated Sept. 21-27 in honor of the first World Congress of the Deaf, held that week in 1951.

As part of the celebration, International Day of Sign Languages is observed on Sept. 26.

The purpose of Deaf Awareness Week is twofold. First, it is celebration of deaf culture. But, while serving that purpose it also helps achieve several other objectives, including:

- ♦ Separating fact from fiction about deaf culture
- ♦ Understanding the differences in attitude toward deafness by the hearing and deaf cultures
- ♦ Learning about types, degrees and causes of hearing loss and other audiological information

- ♦ Familiarizing oneself with deaf terminology, including sign language and other communication modes
- ♦ Understanding the functions of assistive devices used by people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- ♦ Learning tips for communicating with deaf and hard of hearing people
- ♦ Developing a better understanding of deaf culture
- ♦ Recognizing that deaf people, in the words of former Gallaudet University president I. King Jordan, "Can Do Anything Except Hear!"

For more information, please contact the National Association of the Deaf at www.nad.org

** Reprinted from the National Association of the Deaf Web site.*

